

**NPS Fire Communications & Education Program  
Fire Connections II Workshop – Santa Fe, New Mexico  
February 24 – 28, 2003**

**Welcome**

***Ernest Ortega, NPS State Director***

Director Ortega opened with an overview of the rich cultural history of Santa Fe. He discussed the cultural and natural resources of the state and how the support office has ties to the Santa Fe Trail and Route 66 through the Long Distance Trails and the Cultural Resources Program. He explained how his office interfaces with state and local agencies on fire management, water rights, and border issues. They are currently focused on tourism and involved with the Governor's Office to promote the cultural heritage and natural resources of New Mexico.

**The Realities of Governmental Communications**

***Karen Breslin, Public Affairs Specialist, Intermountain Region,***

Karen has worked as a Capitol Hill reporter for the Bureau of National Affairs Inc., teaches college courses on American Government and holds a law degree. Through an exercise where participants were asked to list the supervisors up their chain of command to the president, she conveyed the numerous actors who influence a message or policy as it passes from one layer to the next. Agency decisions are subject to influence by external groups and internal forces, and agency personnel need to recognize that these other parties have an important stake in agency actions.

Shifts in administrations result in changes in the priorities of government agencies who are coming under new leadership. Such shifts in policy direction are a part of the American political process and how well agencies read and address those shifts can determine the success or failure of a policy or program. These considerations also affect local sites. While there is sometimes a reluctance to accept these changes in policy direction, it is important that employees support their organization regardless of their personal feelings.

Politics can also set the stage for how an agency deals with issues such as fire. Again, there are different entities that have differing views about how fires should be fought or not fought and how areas might or might not be closed to the public for safety reasons. It is important to stay abreast of others' views and understand how various actors affect agency decisions. A good rule of thumb is to think outside the agency and to find common ground.

Hot issue briefings are a way to keep key players apprised of potentially contentious issues and to provide an understanding of stakeholders and their views. It is important to keep internal audiences with management authority over a park or program informed about any potentially contentious issues or policies. In doing so, those communications should be written with an understanding that they may be subject to Freedom of Information Act requests and could appear in the newspaper or otherwise made public.

When an agency faces a difficult issue, such as the Cerro Grande fire, how well the agency responds to that event will affect the fall-out from that event or issue. A video of Regional Director Karen Wade's interview on the Cerro Grande fire was offered as an example of good communications during a crisis because Ms. Wade was given high marks by the reporter/questioner for her straightforward, sincere and empathetic response to the tragedy. She spoke as a member of the community, and accepted responsibility for the event, rather than adopting a defensive, stonewalling posture.

Other media tips included:

- Keep use of jargon to a minimum (or if you do use jargon – define it!)
- Talk to a sixth grade level
- Refer issues outside of your expertise and job to the proper person
- Have one spokesperson in a crisis.

### **Interpretation Education and Fire - Connecting to NPS Programs**

#### ***Neil DeJong, Chief of Interpretation and Education, Intermountain Regional Office***

Neil began his presentation by having staff read the following quotes (See attached quotes) regarding education and interpretation. He pointed out that the many quotes that came from mission statements, policies, high-level NPS staff often conflicted with each other, but that they shared many of the same key words such as connecting, opportunities, and communication. He said a program should not always be so concerned about who says what, but that the strategic plan and general meaning need to be consistent.

With regard to the quotes, Neil noted that the quotes had words and meanings that were both tangible and intangible, strongly linked together. As an example, he requested the tangible and intangible words and concepts related to fire shelters.

#### **Fire shelter “Tangibles” (*examples*)**

- Aluminum
- Weighs a couple pounds
- Has a yellow carrying case

#### **Fire shelter “Intangibles” (*examples*)**

- Requirement
- Survival
- Comfort
- Fear
- Training
- A sense of security
- Death
- Acceptance of risk/mitigation
- Safety

Of the intangibles there were words that everyone can relate to and understand, these are called

“Universal Concepts.” Examples include:

- Death
- Survival
- Fear
- Safety

Neil addressed that the best way to relate tangibles to intangibles is through universal concepts. This is important when trying to explain a subject like fire to a variety of audiences outside of the fire world. The reason behind the success of Karen Wade’s interview was she presented her points in plain language to the universal concepts of sadness, pain, and sorrow the public was feeling.

It is important to keep this in mind when trying to reach audiences with fire messages. An example is that homeowners in life-long learning and students in curriculum-based education programs can be included as part of the fire education program. Take stock of resources that are already in place such as the park’s education specialist who may have tools and systems in place you can take advantage of for fire education programs. They can train teachers to take messages to students and outside communities. The same is true of the general interpretation staff. You can use their programs and tools to reach communities and community leaders.

One advantage of having a young program like the Fire Communication and Education Program is the freedom to break new ground. Older NPS programs do not allow flexibility, but with the fire education efforts there are fewer constraints that allow for tremendous opportunities. He encouraged people to think outside the box and to come up with new ways to get the fire messages out.

### **Fire Communication and Education - Past, Present and Future...**

#### ***Roberta D’Amico, National Interagency Fire Center***

Roberta said it was important to discuss the past, present, and future of the fire education program because one can’t tell where one is going if one doesn’t know where one has been. She felt the best way to do this was to review some of the key points in fire history in the NPS and other agencies to see how perspectives on wildland fire have been shaped by history and how it is now viewed by the public, agencies, and other parties.

While attending the National Interpretive Advisory Board meeting at the 2002 National Association for Interpretation (NAI) Conference, Roberta told how a discussion about *The Maturation of Interpretation* described how the field of interpretation had evolved to a higher level of effectiveness. Comparing it to the new program of Fire Communication and Education, she wondered how far the program had come since it started and where it was going. She noted many people felt communication was like a magic wand, and *poof*, the lack of knowledge or misunderstandings would disappear instantaneously. Comparing it to the education of seat belts and recycling, she said fire communications and education was not a magic wand and to educate people takes time.

The analogy to the magic wand brought her back to the point that it will take a while to be successful in this program. To continue the discussion, she presented a brief history of where fire education and

prevention had been.

- Federal fire protection began in national parks after the army assumed administration and protection of Yellowstone National Park in 1886.
- After the traumatic fire season of 1910, the U.S. Forest Service took on the primary role of fire suppression.
- In 1963, the Leopold Report that said fire was a part of the ecosystem, prompting changes in NPS fire policy.
- The 1950s saw fire as indispensable. Noted early years of fire program at Everglades and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.
- The 1960s were a formative time for NPS when fire research and agency attitude changes brought about the use of fire management and prescribed burn as a good way to manage forests.
- Alaska in the 1970's (this was addressed by Morgan Miller during "Open Mike" earlier in the day)
- In 1988 the Yellowstone fires changed public perception of fire from good to perhaps not-so-good [at least at the immediate time of the fire].
- In 1992, the book Young Men and Fire brought the reality of wildland fire to the public.
- In 1994, the loss of 14 firefighters on Storm King Mountain in Colorado brought about the 1995 fire policy.
- In 2000, the Cerro Grande fire occurred.

Some individuals have stated that the Cerro Grande Fire was the "birth" of the National Fire Plan. The National Fire Plan brought two additional things:

1. The development of the National Park Service Fire Communications and Education Program and the FEPIS positions.
2. The organization of a group to develop the National Park Service-National Fire Plan Communications Plan.

Discussion continued about strategic planning, visioning or the idea of what "desired futures" would be for the program. Roberta passed out the feedback received from the evaluations, which will help define what's working and what's not in Fire Communications and Education [see attached for evaluations].

- The first set of evaluations distributed contained comments from the various Fire Education, Prevention, and Information Specialists regarding their first year to year-and-a-half on the job. (SEKI being the most unusual, this position was established before the National Fire Plan).
- The second set was evaluations by the immediate supervisors of the Fire Education, Prevention, and Information Specialists and there were many good and constructive comments contained therein.
- The third set of evaluations solicited the comments and perspectives of colleagues, both NPS partners as well as other public and private partners regarding the work of the Fire Education, Prevention, and Information Specialists.

Roberta concluded with the idea that evaluating the lessons learned in order to evaluate where the program currently stands is feedback that could be used as background for the development of a strategic plan for fire communications and education that will shape the future of the program. Roberta

noted that internal and external understanding of the Fire Education and Prevention Program has increased with the addition of communication and education positions in the field.

The need for a Fire Communication and Education Strategic Plan and perhaps a working committee was discussed and the consensus was that it was a good idea. April 2-4, 2003 were the dates proposed to meet with the facilitator, Wilma Strohmeier, to begin crafting a strategic plan and discussing the future direction of the Fire Communication and Education Program.

### **Natural Resources Information Liaison: The Natural Connection**

#### ***Mike Whatley, Manager, NPS Information Services Branch***

Mike said it was an exciting time for the NPS and that there are close parallels between his group and that of the Fire Communication and Education Program. He talked about the organizational structure of the Natural Resources Information Division (NRID) and how the fire program and NRID shared many of the same concerns with stewardship groups. He said they have to have different ways of communicating with different target groups including the scientific community, the public and agencies. His organization is well designed with a communications umbrella that includes public affairs expertise, education specialists, and both interpretative and publications specialists.

Mike said his group had a lot of information that presented a challenge, such as in the fields of environmental restoration and fire. The traditional role of interpretation did not meet all their needs; they had to go above and beyond traditional interpretation (although traditional interpretation is still an important component in any communications and education initiative). Mike used fire as an example; it is a complicated issue to communicate and different fire situations require different communications scenarios.

The “one size fits all” role of traditional interpretation does not work in fire situations, as there are too many variables. One must develop fluid and dynamic processes that require one to fine-tune and to find *universal concepts* and *dynamics* for those various audiences. He defined a universal as the hull of a ship and a dynamic as the different sail configurations on the ship.

To be successful one has to match up the tools of communications to reach the different audiences. Those tools include defining the topic, the message, the audience and the technique. He gave an example of a prior initiative addressing acid rain with traditional NPS tools like campfire programs and flyers which are not wide reaching and hard to measure, versus a program that handed out buttons and maps at the Canadian border and achieved greater success.

His group has been tasked to develop a primer that would provide an overview on NPS fire policy that would reach different audiences and that his crew would share those findings with the Fire Education and Prevention Group.

### **Panel Discussion--Connecting to the Interagency System**

#### ***Panel Facilitator: Jim Whittington***

#### ***Panelists: Mary Zabinski, Fire Communication Specialist, USDA Forest Service***

### ***Southwestern Region***

***Jay Ellington, Fire Intelligence Coordinator Southwest Coordination Center***

***Dolores Maese, Public Affairs Officer, Santa Fe National Forest***

#### **Jay Ellington**

Jay gave an overview powerpoint presentation on the Southwest Coordination Center (SWCC) and the Southwest Area Wildland Fire Operations website. Jay noted that he worked as part of the Predictive Services Group, which includes the Geographic Area Meteorologists. He discussed the Resource Ordering Status System (ROSS) and some of products SWCC produces, including daily fire activity and resource statusing reports, and weekly, monthly, and seasonal fire weather/fire danger outlooks. He also discussed year-to-date fire summaries as well as some of the graphics and maps they use.

#### **Mary Zabinski**

Mary spoke about her background as a Forest Service PAO and that she did not appreciate the depth of wildland fire until she came to the Southwest. She commented that the interagency mix in the southwestern United States is very strong and that her position had “morphed” over the years from writing speeches to being a fire IO. She said the Forest Service recognized the need for fire information specialists and gave her more responsibilities.

She began working with other agencies including BLM and NPS and as the Southwest Coordination Center began to develop, they began to understand the benefit of working together. From their experience came the realization that there was a need for qualified Information Officers on incidents because fire is important in the Southwest and the need to get information out is vital.

Jay came up with the idea for the website and once they began posting timely and pertinent information, the media began to take advantage of the site and also began learning more about wildland fire and asking for detailed information on fire incidents. The web site lists any fire-related press releases from any agency in the Southwest and provides relevant fire information in the off-season. As he is a National Park Service employee, he emphasized that the website is not a Forest Service site, but a truly interagency affiliated site that belongs to all agencies.

#### **Delores Maese**

Delores Maese has worked her entire career at the Santa Fe National Forest and is a regional native familiar with culture and traditions and the fire history of the area. She is grateful for the SWCC and the interagency system that has grown in this area, because she knows all the agencies and their staff, a key reason as to why she feels she is successful in her job. She noted that the Santa Fe National Forest had six Type I incidents in 2002, and that the fire season is arriving earlier. Along with the early arrival of fire season is the need for earlier communication and interagency assistance.

There is a public affairs roundtable comprised of all agencies, tourism groups and emergency groups that meets quarterly to address how emergency situations would affect each group; they are focusing on the Santa Fe Water Shed which is overgrown. The interagency group is developing a worst-case scenario plan to help them create contingencies. They will also be conducting a media training in March which

will involve training some reporters to give them the training and background into all aspects of wildland fire, safety and communications.

She said the communication between all parties involved in SWCC and other government offices has been extremely beneficial.

She summed up the presentation by reaffirming the benefits of interagency partnerships within the Southwest and that everyone has a stake in fire issues and no single agency can do it alone.

## **Fuels Overview: The Gamut Revisited**

*John Segar, Wildland Urban Interface Coordinator, NPS-FMPC*

### **Healthy Forest Initiative (HFI)**

The 2000 fire season and the Cerro Grande Fire brought about the National Fire Plan (NFP) under the Clinton Administration. It evolved during the Bush Administration into the Healthy Forest Initiative (HFI). While the politicians emphasized the differences, changes for field staff were minimal. Both the NFP and the HFI focus on proactive stances for forest management.

### **Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)**

After 2000 the Wildland Urban Interface Initiative (WUI) was introduced to fight the fuel battle. The initiative was to save lives, property, resources and money by investing in hazardous fuel reduction and community protection and preparation. However, it is impossible to turn around 70 to 100 years of fuel buildup in two years. For years, the first priority of wildland fighting was to protect lives and structures, but during that time the fuels kept accumulating and now every part of the United States has issues with fuels build-up.

The Fire Behavior Triangle is comprised of fuels, weather and topography. Fuel is the only side of the fuel triangle which man can manipulate/manage. Fuels management is the process of moving from current fuels conditions to desired fuels conditions. The Fire Management Plan is the path to reach that desired condition and may include use of mechanical removal, chemical treatment, prescribed fire, fire suppression and natural fire to attain that condition.

Generally, the more intense fuels treatment is, the higher the cost, but the more quickly the desired condition is reached. Prescribed fire is cheaper, but may take several treatments. Fuels management today involves a number of issues including the wildland-urban interface, contracting, mechanical utilization, Fire Regimes I, II, III and Condition Classes I, II and III, as well as collaboration.

### **Contracting**

John discussed the need to contract out for work associated with fire management. For 2004 the NPS is being directed to contract out 50 percent of its fuel management. Contracting has always been a large part of firefighting and will become more prevalent in other aspects of fire management.

### **Mechanical removal**

Mechanical removal has not been used in many NPS units. In many cases, the NPS culture of resource preservation, combined with general inexperience in managing mechanical treatments, has created a bias in the National Park Service against mechanical treatments. The reality is that while mechanical treatments are not appropriate for all fuels treatment projects, there are many NPS units where mechanical treatments are appropriate and can be managed cost effectively and to minimize resource impact. We need to remember our accountability to the public. It is our duty and our way of showing the public we are using money wisely and getting things done. We should therefore consider using the right tool for the right job and regardless of past thinking

## Collaboration

Collaboration needs to be explored and improved in the fire community and local areas to explore what can work for them. WUI targets high-risk communities that are on lists established by the states, however, collaboration between all agencies involved should help set priorities for WUI projects.

Collaboration takes time and patience, and must take into account all parties including our peers, and public and elected officials.

Example:

*A community makes the decision through collaboration to use mechanical removal of fuels instead of prescribed fire due to smoke issues. Though mechanical treatment is more expensive, due to health concerns of those in the community (elderly, asthma sufferers, etc.), mechanical treatment may be more practical.*

## Utilization

The NPS has not conducted traditional timber sales as a way to remove fuel loads, however there are several pilot projects for fuel removal that are using contractors who will remove cut timber and sell it. These options needs to be explored very carefully. Utilization of fuels is a good practice to reduce fuel loads, but is not always practical due to size and quality of the trees being removed.

## Fire Regimes

I	0-35 years	Ponderosa pine low severity	
II	0-35 years	Grass Shrub	stand replacement severity
III	35-100 + years	Douglas fir	mixed severity
IV	35-100+ years	Lodge pole	stand replacement severity
V	>200	Tropical	stand replacement severity

## Forest Condition Classes

	Fire Return Interval	Historic Range Variability	Fire Risk	Treatment Options
I	low	low	moderate	maintenance
II	modest	medium	high	restoration
III	high	high	extreme	difficult to restore



The Healthy Forest Initiative seeks to streamline the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. The underlying assumption is that strong consensus for a proposed treatment is the best plan. By gaining consensus before going to the public for input, the public already has provided some input and is more likely to accept the proposal. There are 10 test projects investigating ways to streamline NEPA without ignoring NEPA's mandate. The challenge is not to go around the Endangered Species Act or the National Environmental Policy Act, but to find ways to get the job done more efficiently.

### **The Role of the Fire Education and Prevention Program**

As a new program, there are many opinions of and expectations for the Fire Communications and Education Program. Among the many opinions and questions regarding the positions: are they another interpreter, another PIO, another web geek, prevention technician or fuel treatment facilitator? Projects from prevention education staff are seen as good projects, but they compete with other fire projects.

How do you evaluate successes and what are the responsibilities of prevention/education staff? There are many different interpretations of the potential and future of the role. How should Fire Education, Prevention and Information staff measure accomplishments and estimate benefits to obtain needed money for the program?

The challenge is to show successes and to communicate these successes to those with budget allocation responsibilities. Some suggestions included:

- Talk about what really worked and what techniques were used.
- Look at experiments that did not work to show that the program has looked at lessons learned.

The NPS fire education/prevention program is a resource that other agencies do not have and it must not be wasted. It is important to show what the perception of the program was, what the reality is now, and what people can expect from it in the future. Budgets will be tight in the future and it is important to establish the program or risk losing funding or support.

### **The National Fire Plan Operation Reporting System (NFPORS)**

The National Fire Plan Operation Reporting System (NFPORS) has replaced FASTRACS to request project funding and prioritize projects. Other agencies are doing the same thing as the NPS. Go on-line with NFPORS to see what they are doing – <http://nfpors.gov>.

### **Los Alamos Volunteer Task Force**

*John Hogan, USGS Jemez Mountains Field Station*

*Craig Martin, Volunteer Coordinator*

A Volunteer Task Force (VTF) was established to help the community of Los Alamos, New Mexico deal with the aftermath of the Cerro Grande fire. Homes of thirty percent of the students at the Los Alamos Mountain Elementary School were lost in the Cerro Grande Fire. Initially the VTF adopted a county nature trail to help the sixth grade students cope with the effects of the fire. The VTF is a non-profit organization dedicated to sound ecological stewardship and cross-cultural relationships by providing opportunities for service learning and hands-on outdoor education. It emphasizes forest health, fire ecology and post fire recovery through citizen based science.

Since May 2000, the VTF has logged more than 40,619 volunteer hours involving more than 2,600 volunteers. Science is relevant to the lives of many residents of Los Alamos due to the proximity of Los Alamos Nuclear Laboratory and the many employees that make their homes in the community. The projects that involved these families are serious real science. One of the VTF projects conducted by schoolchildren included collecting the first seedling survival data for the U.S. Forest Service. Fire ecology is the cornerstone of the VTF projects and with grant money provided through the Clean Water Act, work is ongoing for watershed rehabilitation in riparian areas and intermittent mountain streams.

People became a part of the VTF for many reasons including

- the healing process.
- restoration of the mountain that they viewed from their homes.
- to contribute a positive action after such a negative event.
- to thank firefighters.
- to prevent monsoon rains from eroding the fire area and washing a wall of mud onto the town.

Volunteers worked within the boundary of the Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER), an area usually off limits to the public. A multi-agency community task force comprised of Los Alamos County, the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, and Los Alamos National Laboratory was coordinated under the Incident Management System and began remediation. Buses carried more than 500 volunteers a day many of which were entire families. They mulched 1,200 acres before the monsoon season. By the end of the first year they had contributed 23,500 hours, mulched nearly 600 acres and filled and placed 66,000 sandbags.

In the second year they continued reforestation efforts by planting trees. The 1,500 volunteers planted 12,000 trees on 200 acres of the watershed. They rebuilt trails that had washed away and even designed and built a new trail that loops around the foothills above the town. After the second year, they elevated their efforts to teach fire education to the sixth grade classes at Mountain Elementary School. The trail rebuilding effort evolved into science and monitoring projects. They have conducted seedling survival studies, helped restore stream channels, planted trees and have put together a seed ball program for fourth graders. The school has instituted a field day once a week where students collect post-fire data

There is a great focus on stewardship. The kids learned that the restoration they participated in will not have an immediate return. They are learning they will have to take care of the restored areas until they are grown, but that their children will be able to enjoy the fruits of their labor.

The students have gotten to work with interesting tools ranging from shovels and tree planters to GPS units and microscopes. There is a multidisciplinary approach that involves photography and fine arts, poetry and language arts, journal exercises and social studies. Another successful element of the project is that it gets the students out into nature where many have never been before. It has helped take the fear out of nature and fire.

The goal is to continue to evolve the curriculum-based education component so that it works its way up

though the middle and high schools eventually becoming a part of the local university extension. The goal for the VTF is to continue helping their community and any other community impacted by wildfire to heal, restore and improve their fire-damaged community.

### **Cerro Grande Field Trip**

#### ***Dean Clark; Fire Management Officer, Bandelier NM***

The Fire Management Officer (FMO) from Bandelier National Monument escorted the group the location where the Cerro Grande Fire escaped containment and gave an overview of how the fire was planned, ignited, and fought. He explained the terrain, prevailing winds and fuel loads and how the park had planned for the fire.

The group also discussed air quality and smoke management issues. Dean stated that the dilemma of implementation of the Clean Air Act by EPA delegated the enforcement responsibility to states and counties. It threatens to contravene the National Fire Plan programs of hazard fuel reduction and federal land management agencies fire use and prescribed fire policies.

On the way back to town, the group stopped at the home of John Hogan, a USGS employee and Los Alamos resident very much involved in the volunteer effort to restore the watershed. He explained the progression of the fire and how it had burned through the area. John had been doing hazard reduction on his house after the Dome wildfire in 1996 had threatened Los Alamos. The work paid off when the 2000 Cerro Grande Fire entered Los Alamos and all but two homes on his street were destroyed, many by small fires that burned through vegetation and pine duff on or near homes, after the main fire had swept through the area. He had prepared his home by clearing away vegetation, raking pine needles, and applying stucco to his home and installing a metal roof.

He further explained what the town and county were doing to prepare for any future fires and about his volunteer effort involved in restoration and post-fire scientific data gathering. While many new homes were in the process of being constructed, there were still many vacant lots. John noted many people were still waiting funding from FEMA claims to reconstruct their homes.

### **Lessons Learned**

#### ***Roberta D'Amico, Fire Management Program Center***

*Note: The original presenter was unable to attend due to a family emergency, therefore, the group held a general discussion regarding the Fire Communications and Education Program.*

Lessons Learned is a system used by many large organizations as a successful way to measure best business practices, document success stories and to improve organizational development. The Fire Education and Prevention group decided this was a good method to gauge the success and challenges of their second year of operation. The ensuing discussion touched on several different topics, which are highlighted below.

General discussion included:

## **Supporting multiple parks within a region**

Jim Whittington asked if other team members had difficulty in defining whom they support or how many parks they are responsible for.

Others said there was confusion about regional positions versus multiple park positions and that they did not know if they should refuse to support other parks or work with them to find someone who could take on the Fire Education Prevention role.

Roberta said the PDs were specifically meant to be flexible, but that each position needed to work with their supervisor to define their job and to develop an annual work plan with clear goals and directions.

Scott Sticha recommended visiting surrounding parks to meet face to face with relevant personnel to discuss possible roles and to try to work out a satisfactory relationship where both parties knew the boundaries.

Morgan Miller noted that two Alaska parks, Denali and Yukon Charley, evaluate requests for help from other Alaska parks on a case-by-case basis and that they often try to enable someone in that park to help out.

Roberta suggested having workshops in each region that would accommodate all parks in facilitating and educating the parks about the Fire Communication and Education positions.

Marty O'Toole said that FMOs, Fire GIS positions and Fire Ecologists were also suffering the same dilemma of unclear roles. Morgan said maybe the various positions in the fire offices that could share the load when it came to requests from neighboring parks.

Jim Whittington asked how could you say no to these requests to which Roberta said maybe the PWR and IMR should meet to discuss the issue. She suggested taking the problem to them and then proposing a solution with which people could live.

## **Committee involvement, NPS representation**

Dave Eaker said he was attending a number of fire-related committees and that some were not practical, but that he felt his NPS presence was important. Others agreed noting with all the interagency focus these days it was important to have a NPS presence.

Morgan suggested prioritizing those committees that were beneficial or critical and then stepping back from others, making it clear that you wanted to attend, but that active participation might not always be possible.

Roberta suggested finding other NPS staff that might be able to sit on these committees.

Roberta said that some time soon she would like to have a discussion with the group about career development and how they could cultivate the positions and help people become more a part of management. When she asked if the team felt a part of the park management team, the answer was a resounding no, but that they did feel a part of the park's fire teams. Roberta encouraged them to interject themselves into more management operations and to knock on doors to make sure people knew who they were and what they could do for the park's program and management operations.

## **Partners in Prevention and Education**

***Facilitator: Lori Iverson***

***Panelists:***

***Bequi Livingston, Lead Field Coordination, Southwest Fire Use Training Academy***

***Terri Wildermuth, Firewise***

***Ed Brunson, Fire Education Director, The Nature Conservancy***

### **Bequi Livingston**

Bequi began her session with a brief background of her firefighting and public relations career that led to her being hired in 1994 as one of four "Fire Communicators" for the Cibola National Forest. At first it was unclear what the position did, as it was not prevention and not management.

While attending her first public meeting for a planned prescription fire in Albuquerque, her role became clear and defined in her own mind. The audience was hostile and unfriendly because they had not had the opportunity to provide input for the fire planning. They were scared and uneasy because they did not know what the results of the planned fire would be. After seeing her uniformed colleague make no headway trying to explain the benefit of fire, she realized there was a large gap in communication and set out to change it. During subsequent meetings with the public she worked to change the prescription of the fire to include a firebreak that the homeowners could help design. Once included in the decision-making process and further educated about fire ecology, the residents felt more a part of the process and even helped out as volunteers during the burn.

### **Her Lessons Learned:**

- Education – The government agencies must improve internal and external education to make sure everybody affected knows what is going on.
- Interagency Cooperation – Involve everybody possible - federal, state and local fire organizations and community organizations as appropriate – distribute as widely as possible.
- Public Involvement – Participation is key and it helps the public to become stakeholders in a project. Media should also be included, involving them in training and fires brings this group in as stakeholders as well.
- Notification – Be creative, go beyond normal television, radio, or newspaper notification - try offbeat graphics, posters, and fliers.
- Be Proactive – Network and work together to be prepared.

### **Terri Wildermuth**

Terri recently retired from the New Mexico Forestry Division where she served as a public affairs

specialist who worked in the Firewise Program, a fire education effort that seeks to train trainers who will instill fire safe practices in their communities by having meetings and trying to effect change.

After training in Prescott, Arizona one of her first challenges was to set up a two-day workshop in Ruidoso, a high fire risk community in south central New Mexico. Her first question was how were they going to get people to attend as many residents only lived there part-time and did not understand fire, while others were not keen to cut down or remove shade trees and other flammable vegetation. She knew it was going to be difficult to reach many of the residents.

One of her solutions was to try to attract all kinds of Ruidoso residents from landscapers and real estate people to civic leaders and elected officials--people who could take the fire prevention message back to their colleagues who were builders, city officials, etc. The desired end result was safe zoning, fire safe structures and defensible space. Instead of presenting a two-day meeting, knowing many business people cannot afford to take two days off, Terry decided to hold the same meeting on two separate days. She also sought out a local person to be the coordinator for the meeting, bringing more acceptance from the community.

After the success at Ruidoso, other people came to her and asked how they could have Firewise Workshops in their communities. She helped develop flier templates and taught them how to reach out into the community. Successful workshops were held in Chama, Angel Fire, Taos, Santa Fe and Silver City.

When working with these individuals she asked them how they wanted to get people's attention and they came up with the slogan, "Cerro Grande Can Happen Here." The workshops were organized to have speakers from the local community in the mornings and training in the afternoon. They also had demonstrations of equipment to prevent or fight fires. Through her efforts, Firewise is becoming well known in New Mexico.

### **Ed Brunson**

The Nature Conservancy is the largest environmental conservation organization in the world holding 1.3 million acres in 35 countries, with 3,500 total staff and 1,500 land preserves. It has a history of owning and managing land to conserve it for biodiversity values. They use a planning approach called Conservation By Design, strategizing to set land management priorities through eco-regional planning. They design management strategies that involve fire management, effect conservation action and measure success.

Eco-regional planning often involves planning in large conservation landscapes with significant fire issues. Much of their land is in Fire Regimes II and III, and convincing partners that fire is part of the ecosystem is in their management strategy. The focus is not on fire prevention but applied fire and fire ecology. In 2002, the Nature Conservancy carried out 70,000 acres of prescribed burns that totaled 4-5 percent of the land they own.

They also depend on partnerships with NPS, BLM, USFWS, USFS and BIA as well as offering many traditional training courses. They partner extensively with the National Interagency Prescription Fire Training Center. One of The Nature Conservancy's key future needs is to educate managers, career employees, communities, and decision-makers about the role of fire in land management. Ed also believes that there needs to be a better network of communications staff, educating managers as spokespersons and being prepared to make the best use of seasonal educational opportunities.

For the future, the Nature Conservancy is looking at connecting their staff with Firewise, improving training and education efforts, building on their international capacities and utilizing community-based fire projects and education platforms. He summed up his presentation by saying, "Look at things on the ground. Where partners stand on the ground together, differences disappear."

### **NPS/SCA Fire Education Program 2002**

***Facilitator: Marty O'Toole***

***Panelists:***

***Christina Stark, '02 Rocky Mountain Nature Association Fellowship - Bailey Charitable Trust***

***Lori Iverson, Grand Teton NP***

***Scott Sticha, Rocky Mountain NP***

***Jim Whittington, Bandelier NM***

### **Christina Stark**

Last summer, Christina had a research opportunity with Rocky Mountain National Park and the Rocky Mountain Nature Association, the park's non-profit partner. She chose to research what residents in the area knew about wildland fire and the park's fire program. She chose to do her research on this topic because:

- There was a nearby national forest.
- The large number of homes in the WUI.
- The high amount of fire activity that began in the 2000 fire season.
- The rising conflicts and issues related to wildland fire.

She began by looking at what research had been done that focused on knowledge, attitudes, past experience and motivation and how they might impact fire awareness in the community. She found out that previous studies proved education could be a part of fire management tools.

Her study worked in conjunction with the park's Student Conservation Association Fire Education Corps Team that went out into the community to help create defensible space around homes. While the SCA team assessed the needs of homeowners in the WUI, Christina measured the success of the SCA team by surveying to learn if SCA had changed homeowner opinions. This was done through a mixed method design: an 18-item survey and focus groups.

The results showed that 100 percent of the people contacted were satisfied. Thirty seven percent were "Satisfied" and 63 percent were "Very satisfied." One hundred percent of the homeowners thought

the SCA staff were professional, knowledgeable, and friendly.

### **Summary of Survey**

- A surprising 81 percent of homeowners felt they were responsible for protecting their home.
- A majority supported mechanical tree removal.
- A majority disagreed that prescribed fire should not be used because of smoke issues.
- A majority disagreed with the idea that prescribed burns were too dangerous.
- The cost and work prevented many people from making defensible space around their homes.
- Most people knew about fire management strategies, but wanted more in-depth information.
- Homeowners supported Rocky Mountain National Park fire management strategies, but wanted concise information.
- Homeowners thought wood removed for fuel reduction should be utilized.

### **Summaries of Individual SCA Student Conservation Fire Education Teams**

#### **Scott Sticha's Rocky Mountain Team**

Christina's research documented some of the team's efforts, but Scott said the team did well. He added it would take time to get the team focused and they needed more knowledge on the NPS mission, however, they would greatly assist in informing the community during prescribed fires. He will not have formal team in 2003, but will take advantage of a grant from the Colorado Department of Forestry for a six-month information program.

#### **Jim Whittington's Bandelier [Northern New Mexico] Team**

There are no homes directly on the park border that would be threatened by wildland fire, however, the park also borders the Valles Caldera National Preserve that does have WUI issues. During 2002, the SCA Fire Education Crew concentrated on the west and southwest sections of the park. Like others among the Fire Communication and Education group, Jim was out on fire a lot and did not have a lot of time to supervise the team. The team leader was replaced halfway through the summer, the new leader completed a lot of work and homeowners were very positive about their presence. He will have a 2003 team, but emphasized the need for backup supervision for the team's effectiveness.

#### **Lori Iverson's Grand Teton [Teton Interagency] Team**

Lori said her team had some difficulties in the beginning, but her team leader was very strong and did a great job. She said it was important for the team leader to have separate housing to maintain the leader/subordinate role. She said it was a textbook team that staffed information tables at seven community events and accomplished a fuel reduction program at the end of their time at the park. She said she wished she had not waited until the end of the season as the project took an additional day to complete. Her team leader had a positive interview on Wyoming Public Radio, which Lori shared with the group. The local fire marshal applauded the team's efforts, but already has an effective education program. Housing is still an issue in and near Jackson Hole, Wyoming, and Lori has requested two SCA Fire Education interns for 2003.

#### **Roberta D'Amico**

Roberta summed up the presentation by saying that the program really expanded in 2002, which



brought some challenges. In preparing for the third year of the program the group noted some of the lessons learned from the first two years.

- The program needs more structure from SCA. Due to some confusion regarding program agreements between SCA and NPS, teams were not always aware of that a program agreement existed, therefore did not work as efficiently as possible.
- There is a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with traditional SCA interns (non-fire), which does not specifically address the fire education teams.
- There were questions regarding the \$70,000 cost for the Fire Education Corps Teams. What exactly did the money cover? There will be more definition for the 2003 teams.
- The NPS needed more flexibility in intern definition. The six-person team was not always appropriate for the situation. The options for 2003 include the original six-person team, a single fire education intern, a combination traditional conservation and fire education intern and a combination traditional conservation fire education intern that will be selected by the hosting unit.
- There is need for a second level supervisor and in 2003 there will be more flexibility and accountability for the program.

**Benefits of the program included:**

- The SCA teams count toward a park's fire contracting requirements.
- The SCA members also could be counted as volunteers.
- The SCA program is a great recruiting tool for the NPS.

The 2003 proposal includes the following host areas:

- National Interagency Fire Center / Fire Management Program Center
- Cape Cod NS
- Virginia Partnership Crew
- Ozark NSR
- Indiana Dunes NS
- Teton Interagency
- Flagstaff Areas
- Bandelier NM (2)
- North Cascades NP
- Lassen Volcanic NP
- Point Reyes NS
- Golden Gate NRA
- Pacific Great Basin Support Office
- Santa Monica Mountains NRA
- Sequoia and Kings Canyon NP
- Great Basin NP

**The Future of Information**

***Facilitator: Jim Whittington***

**Panelists:**     *Jim Paxon, Retired U.S. Forest Service*  
                      *Bob Summerfield, U.S. Forest Service*

**Bob Summerfield**

Bob is an Information Officer on a Type I Incident Management Team, but he has a day job that is not related to fire.

He pointed out a number of trends in both incidents and incident management:

- Incidents are becoming bigger and more complex--what was atypical is becoming typical.
- Immediacy--With the improvements in technology, the public is developing expectations of detailed information and they want that information in real time on incidents.
- Federal and state workforces continue to decline and positions left open by retirements will not be filled. Reduced staff will bring budget cuts and more outsourcing, making it harder to staff incidents. There may be more use of volunteers (possibly retirees) and AD employees.
- There will likely be a reduction in the number of incident management teams, meaning that teams that remain will be called out more frequently.
- There will be more concern over money and cost reductions, meaning less staff and expertise.
- The increase in Homeland Security will draw the IMTs into more diverse assignments in areas where teams have no experience or expertise.
- The shrinking world will bring more international cooperation and year-round assignments
- With all the above trends there will be continuing and increased pressure to consolidate the fire/IMT system and there may be a National Fire Service or Incident Management Service that would roll all the IMTs into a FEMA-like organization. Information Officers may have to make a choice as to staying with their original agency or moving on to this new, bigger organization. Information officer skill needs will change, demanding more management and supervisory skills with an understanding of strategic planning.

**His wish list for what he would like to see happen is as follows.**

- Institutionalism for the PIO position in the IMT system, appreciation of the PIO skills.
- A recruiting system for PIOs and others incident management team positions.
- Incentives for going out on fire. A backup system at people's main jobs to help people out, special consideration for advancement and consideration of skill improvements attained by fire assignments. Emphasis placed on training, both traditional skills and new technology.
- Improved information exchange between PIOs involving national and regional PIO meetings, interagency details and a fire information web page.
- Agencies need to set aside two to five percent of their funding to allow people going on fires to prepare at home for incidents.
- Super-sized incidents have super-sized information centers and they seem to be reinvented at every large incident. Need to have standing fire information teams for mega events, standard teams that could set up large information centers quickly.

Bottom line—There will be a definite need for leadership in fire information in the future.

## **Jim Paxon**

Jim talked about how the NPS is good at documenting and interpreting history, mentioning the Peshtigo Fire in 1871 that burned 1.2 million acres and killed 1,500 people. He also mentioned the 1910 fire that burned 3 million acres in four days leaving 85 dead. He surmised that the repercussions if a similar incident happened today would be much greater. He said fire levels wax and wane, however, large spikes of major fire events like those of the past few years go beyond the normal cycles.

He believes that NPS fire information officers bring interpretation and education to the PIO role, but they should be truthful about the situation. “Tell what it is,” he said, “even if it is bad.” He also noted that there were two kinds of IOs, “those that have seen fatalities and those that will.”

He continued, “if we look into the future, bad times are coming and we had better get ready.” Information officers must be prepared to handle the increase in media turning up on large fires; on one recent large fire his communications team was handling 2000 calls per day. He is a dedicated spokesperson who keeps everything to a 6<sup>th</sup> grade level--simple and to the point.

Jim’s strategy is to surround himself with good people to whom he can delegate various roles within information. These must be people whom can be trusted to do the job and people with whom you must be willing to lean on for help as well as support when they need help.

Jim was on fire 83 days last year and 101 in 2001. Fire IOs must be able to “speak fire,” know the language and strategies and tactics. On large fires there can be up to 50 PIOs, teams should plan for this potential by having a “gaggle” of PIOs in a “strike team” that could be on standby in weekly or monthly shifts ready to be called out on two-hour notice. He said the future of wildland fire will be bigger, faster, and more damaging and that the high fuel load situations will bring spikes in fire activity and information officers need to be ready.

He also said that there needs to be more mentoring and coaching of younger PIOs. When there is a fire in a national park, Jim has observed a resistance to allowing PIOs to talk to visitors, but we should take advantage of the situation and educate everyone possible about wildland fire.

## **NPS Firewise Programs**

***Facilitator: Scott Sticha***

***Panelists: Morgan Miller, Alaska Region***  
***Barb Stewart, Northeast Region***

## **Barb Stewart**

According to Barb, there are two ways to have success of the Firewise Program

1. Bring it to the attention of your regional director.
2. Present workshops.

Last year she had been unable to fully brief her FMO on her work with Firewise because it was the middle of the fire season and her FMO was not available. In order to do the workshops correctly, she had to obtain support from the local fire department and other involved agencies. In the East it also

meant having a good understanding of the various zoning regulations of the area's communities. She is gaining the support and momentum of the other agencies and has recently completed a display on the Firewise program that has been well received.

### **Morgan Miller**

Morgan noted that 2.29 million acres burned in Alaska in 2002 and that in those fires 4-5 cabins burned and more were threatened. Firewise workshops were held in Kenai in 2001 and she is helping plan for one for Fairbanks in May 2003. Due to the independent nature of Alaskans, challenges include the distrust of government and the widespread isolation of Alaska.

A core group involving NPS, BLM the State of Alaska, emergency services and local Law Enforcement developed a steering committee that sent letters to community leaders across Alaska inviting them to the workshop. They also developed and mailed out fliers that were specifically targeted towards Alaskans and solicited Alaska-specific speakers for the workshop. The NPS sponsored community members by paying for their travel and lodging for the workshop. The thought is that these people were community leaders that would take the Firewise message back to communities. The goal for the workshop was 100 individuals and they are already receiving RSVPs. Morgan's lessons learned included:

- Start early;
- Develop and stick to your budget;
- Target specific audiences; and
- Invite them and to think beyond the workshop.

### **NPS And Project Learning Tree**

*Facilitator: Scott Sticha*

*Panelists: Lori Iverson, Grand Teton NP*

*Jody Lyle, Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks*

### **Jody Lyle**

Jody discussed the organization of a Project Learning Tree Burning Issues Workshops for educators and the public that was held in May 2002. Some of the specifics included

- Finding and reaching out to partners,
- Formatting the workshop and logistics to the goals and objectives that would apply to a local Burning Issues workshop.

She worked to tailor the Burning Issues Workshop to the SEKI area and brought in United States Geological Survey (USGS) staff to talk about invasive plants in the area, and addressed other issues including smoke and air quality issues. She partnered with Joshua Tree NP because they could talk about the differences in ecosystems and how this affected fire behavior. The workshop featured one day in the park and one day in town, the workshop was open to teachers, students as well as park staff. While the turnout was small, they had great response from the diverse and motivated participants

### **Lori Iverson**

Lori conducted two Project Learning Tree workshops in January 2003. The first was a Burning Issues (fire ecology) workshop, while the second was in conjunction with a Ske-Cology workshop conducted at a local ski resort. To promote the workshop, Lori made fliers, sent e-mails, used word of mouth and phone solicitation to attract 22 participants. It was held at a local elementary school that made their computer room available. They used the Burning Issues CD that got rave reviews from participants. The Ske-Cology workshop intertwined fire and fire ecology into an environmental program for skiers and snowboarders. The group did classroom work and also skied to a number of waysides near the slopes that discussed wildlife habitat and natural resources. This was first time that ski ecology and fire ecology have been placed together, but all involved thought a good idea. The resort also offered a display case that the park can make use for an exhibit.

### **Web Connections**

*Tina Boehle, National Interagency Fire Center*

*Judy Chetwin, Intermountain Regional Office*

### **Judy Chetwin**

Judy discussed two different aspects of web pages

- The internet (ParkNet) - available to the public
- The NPS intranet (InsideNPS), available only to NPS employees using the NPS network

She spoke about the beginning of internet use by the NPS in approximately 1995 and the birth of ParkNet. The use of the internet during the Cerro Grande Fire in 2000 to disseminate information was very convenient; the web page received 2000 hit's a day during the time of the fire. She explained the differences between

- park profiles
- expanded websites
- ParkNet
- Natural Resource Profiles
- Inside NPS
- Password issues (only one password per park).

With the help of several handouts, Judy explained how to access and add information to the InsideNPS and Park Profile systems including text and photos. She pointed out that web design courses were available through subscription on the internet, on video and CD ROMs as well as in books. She said that she could provide a one or two day one-on-one training for individuals if she is available. Judy said she would be happy to talk to anyone who had questions about the internet and the NPS systems and that she could be reached in the Intermountain Regional Office.

Please refer to the handouts when attempting to access or change information on any of the intranet or internet web sites.

### **Tina Boele**

Tina debuted a new Fire Web Reporting page that she hopes to have on line by April. It will be listed

as <http://inside.nps.gov/fire/reporting>. She passed out handouts that showed how to report a fire and the various fields of information that the system would handle. It will also allow you to see all the fires currently listed and to get data on them.

She said they had been working with Dennis-Konetzka Group, a Washington DC contractor to update the NPS Fire & Aviation website. Tina will be working with a lot of people in the NPS fire world to beta test the site and obtain feedback.

## **Leading into the Future**

### ***Steve Frye, Chief Ranger, Glacier NP, Type I Incident IC***

“Fire Management” used to be called “Fire Control” and it may not seem like a big difference, but it affects how one approaches wildland fire. Steve began working as a firefighter with a Pulaski in 1966. At that time, the idea of providing information on fire to the public was “verboten.” He said the fire world was opposed to people knowing in detail what they did. As times changed that attitude brought the challenge of educating the public so that they could understand the role of fire in the ecosystem. To this day, he said, Forest Service employees could not talk about the benefit of fire in a suppression strategy or on IC teams they are working on.

In talking about change in the public land mission, Steve said what happens in fire management will define how the US Forest Service will change over the next five years and that will define the future of the US Forest Service.

Fires present a lot of risk to those fighting them, but they also present opportunities. We have evolved to a place where the information officer has been elevated to a command position. He encouraged everyone to always include education in fire messages and that some of the best teachable moments are offered while on a fire because of the direct impacts to the public and the relevance of the timing. Steve stated that his basic team strategy as an incident commander was to bring the greatest power to bear on a fire or emergency including every member of his team. To that end it is vital to have open communication up and down the chain of command and that the strength of a team is in its diverse disciplines.

He noted that as NPS employees and information officers bring an education function that is critical to the objectives of an incident commander. Accept this responsibility and exploit every opportunity to teach or to give information on fire education. The whole business of incident management is about relationships, relationships founded in trust. Information and education are the external face where we build trust and relationships with those affected by fire.

Steve was on the Haymen Fire for 28 days. At first, there was a high degree of mistrust for federal officials; the situation required him to develop trust with the people who already had been out of their homes for three weeks. The strategy to accomplish this was very aggressive outreach that showed empathy and a human aspect, not a bureaucratic face. It involved two public meetings a day with anywhere from 500 to 1,500 people attending. Through those meetings he rebuilt confidence in the abilities of the firefighters, the U.S. Forest Service, and the state of Colorado and strengthened ties in

person-to-person neighbor relationships. It also built confidence for future fires.

Steve discussed that there can't be a fire prevention program without a thorough understanding of what fire is all about. The public is becoming more sophisticated about fire; the public's high expectations demand very large and detailed products from information officers. He discussed how to convey a level of detail in a manner that is understandable and meaningful to the public because the technical abstract of fire often escapes clear understanding. For Steve to succeed as an incident commander, he knew it was up to the information officer staff to come up with a communications strategy. It took several experiments to get the right match of technical and lay language. Each fire is different and the method used to reach the public will depend on the situation.

Steve said the NPS information officers are a "cut above all other state and federal agencies." The NPS brings more to the program including a historical perspective and the interpretive element. As an example he talked about a lesson they learned on the Yellowstone fires on 1988 where they decided that they needed to convey the message that the Yellowstone fires were beneficial, however, the public unfamiliarity with the huge conflagrations they were witnessing did not allow that message to be understood at that time. Instead, the public saw the fires as devastating. To that end they learned a lesson about the timeliness of messages presented by information officers.

The NPS is leading change in fire management. Some of the NPS ideas are accepted and some are not, but regardless, NPS information officers are leaders and teachable moments will arise. The steps being taken by the NPS with regards to fire communications and education is not being done by any other agency. This new programs will bring a value-added perspective to the fire management business.

### **Steve's Basic List of Assumptions for Incident management.**

- He again stressed the importance of relationships. "It's how you get your job done," he said. Trust, empathy and understanding are all qualities that are very important to building relationships. Don't be afraid to be a real person. When he left the Haymen Fire he told the residents he had met and come to know that "a little piece of my heart will stay with you people," and that he really meant it.
- Focus on the external, but don't forget about the internal. People involved with the internal side of incidents don't always know what is going on. You need to make sure they feel that they are a part of the bigger picture because of potential issues and roadblocks. Make sure you go all the way to the bottom of the chain of command and spend some time and effort there. Follow up with an e-mail or call to let them know you appreciate them. Talk about things other than fire, personal things and don't be afraid to suggest thanking the community. As an information officer you are an important tool; you are the public face of that effort, so don't be shy, speak up. You are the professional when it comes to fire information and fire education; you are prepared and can do the job.
- Politics is how we do our job. It is in the funding, policies, authorities and positions. PIOs spend time with political figures and their support is critical to short and long term goals

## **Follow-up questions**

When asked how to deal with citizens trying to get involved in fire management tactics, Steve recommended not “pulling rank” but the use of “successful approximation” a tactic in which you steer them in the direction you want to go by rewarding them into heading your way.

Steve answered another question about home owners who do not want to evacuate by saying you must tell those people that the tactics of fighting the fire will change from saving structures to saving lives and that may change the amount of protection available to other homes in the area. He also agreed that firefighter safety could be compromised in that lifesaving role.

In dealing with people directly impacted by fire he encouraged information officers to try to relate ground tactics to broader goals and to talk in terms the public can understand.

He summed up by asking the group to accept the importance of the information officer’s role and understand that where the NPS goes with fire will be where the entire federal fire programs goes nationally. He said information officers must build trust and bring accountability to the job.

Steve offered that if anyone wanted to talk with him, he would be pleased to do so and encouraged people to e-mail or call him.

## **Open Mike**

### ***Barb Stewart, North East Regional Office***

Barb spoke about a \$25,000 partner grant with Virginia Tech. to promote yard waste management through a test course in the state’s Master Gardener Program. A pilot program beginning in Prince William County is an interagency effort including the State of Virginia and the U.S. Forest Service. She noted the workshops were valuable for the long-term understanding about fire hazards in neighborhoods and areas of wildland urban interface and that it was a great way to bring about better thinking about fire in the communities in a manner that is not a heavy handed.

### ***Morgan Miller, Alaska Region***

Morgan summarized a fire communication effort in the Alaska Region that targets park staff. Because fire suppression in Alaska is primarily by the Bureau of Land Management, State Department of Forestry, and the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service staff are not familiar with fire management strategies. The immense size of the state makes fire suppression a limited management option in many cases where human life or properties are not threatened. Through the Fire Information Messaging System there is emphasis on fire prevention, management and education for park staff. One objective is explaining fire vocabulary and vernacular to de-mystify fire jargon and management tools.

### ***Scott Sticha, Rocky Mountain NP***

Scott discussed a Fire Use Training Academy field exercise that brought media out to see a pile-burning project. He noted that it had taken a long time to set up, but that it provided hands-on look at how



wildfire teams work. The controlled nature of the project provided little threat and gave people a relaxed and non-crisis format to show off wildland fire techniques. He showed the fire education group a quick video of the reporter's coverage which had great fire visuals without the negative aspects associated with a raging wildfire. He offered it as a good way to get safe, positive media coverage.

### **Jody Lyle Sequoia and Kings Canyon NP**

Jody shared her experience about working with actor Stacey Keach who is a Firewise spokesperson. They did multiple national and regional media satellite interviews regarding the benefits of the program and she played videos of some of them. The interviews capped a two-year very successful NOVA fire program in which the film crews followed the SEKI Arrowhead Hot Shots during fire season.

### **Marty O'Toole, Santa Monica Mountains NRA**

Marty talked about the difficulties of mixed ownership in the approximately 155,000 acres of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and the challenge of trying to work with diverse landowners. He said California State Parks, the Santa Monica Land Conservancy, Los Angeles and Ventura Counties and private individuals manage land in the park. Interagency support is critical, as there are different rules for different organizations. It is all WUI land and does not fit a normal fire/community profile so it is difficult and expensive to do fire related projects

### **David Eaker, Zion NP**

David talked about the composition of Zion's approximately 150,000 acres noting there was no WUI in the park. Their fire team manages fire for seven other parks and because of the composition of the area, interagency cooperation is very important. They are in the process of revising their Fire Management Plan and will be soon completing the scoping process. He believes the FMP could be a good model for other smaller parks. He stated that one of the lessons he has learned is that there is a lot good material available from other parks and on various websites and that you can save a lot of time using it instead of trying to create your own.

### **Carol Jandrall, Whiskeytown NRA**

Carol focused on developing a Junior Firefighter program for 7-12 year olds. Fire crews taught some students, but others took the class in the visitor center. They developed a cloth patch and fire ecology class materials receiving some good press for the program. One Girl Scout that took the program called in a fire in her hometown and saved the structure. Carol took the program to local schools last fall. She learned a lesson during a prescribed burn by failing to notify a local school about the fire. Children and teachers at the school became very concerned about the smoke from the fire. She encouraged everyone to put all schools that may be impacted by smoke on contact list used for notification of prescribed fires.

### **Scott Isaacson, Lassen Volcanic NP/Lava Beds NM**

Scott worked with Carol from Whiskeytown on the Junior Firefighter program and helped the park with its first prescribed fire since 1999 (the Hole Fire). He said success stories were very important in promoting the park's fire program and helped his superintendent gain visibility for the park. Last

summer, he was called out on two Type II incidents and one Type I incident as a PIO. He said in the last year he had gone to several job recruitment fairs and participated in the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor as a PIO.

***Michelle Fidler, Southeast Regional Office***

Michele is the group's newest Fire Education, Prevention and Information Specialist and will be relocating to Atlanta, Georgia to begin her job in March. She is currently an interpreter at C&O Canal. She is looking forward to getting started and said the week had been very helpful to her.

***Larry Helmerick, Intermountain Regional Office***

Larry is the group's second newest person on detail from the Department of Energy (DOE). He has extensive public affairs experience with the U.S. Air Force and DOE. He worked from July to November last year in running the Rocky Mountain Information Center that saw five incidents with nine fatalities.

***Jennifer Chapman, Point Reyes NS/Golden Gate NRA***

Jennifer showed videotape of a positive interview with the FMO for a eucalyptus tree removal program. She also had a park fire awareness insert done in cooperation with the Marin Independent Journal and Fire Safe Marin. The park did 400 acres of prescribed burns in 2002. There is a tremendous amount of WUI for GOGA and she is preparing for a Burning Issues Workshop this year. She is also increasing the mailing list for information on prescribed burns.

***Jim Whittington, Bandelier NM***

Jim said he is still working on restoring public confidence after the Cerro Grande Fire and that the Los Alamos Volunteer Task Force has been a great help in that and other fire education endeavors. He was on fire 51 days last year and helped with the park's first prescribed fire since Cerro Grande, involving the burning of piles of slash from the Cerro Grande Fire. The park is working on their Fire Management Plan and is planning scoping meetings for later this year.

***Tina Boehle, Fire Management Program Center***

Tina talked about the Information Officer section of the NPS Fire & Aviation website [<http://www.nps.gov/fuel/fireinfo/IO>] that links to relevant IO information as well as to the NPS Information Officer database. NPS IOs can add their name and availability for incidents. She encouraged everyone to update it frequently, but noted that this is a different type of tool that DOES NOT replace the *Resource Ordering and Status System* (ROSS) [<http://ross.nwcg.gov>]. On a different topic, Tina wanted to recognize Lori Iverson from GRTE who had the most success stories on the NPS Fire & Aviation website for 2002 and encouraged everyone to keep up the good work on Fire Stories, previously called Success Stories.